

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

Claims 1 to 24 (canceled).

Claim 25 (currently amended): A method for managing and monitoring an operation of a plurality of distributed hardware and/or software systems that are integrated into at least one communications network, the plurality of distributed systems being responsible for providing a plurality of different services, the method which comprises:

operating the plurality of distributed systems in a distributed manner, with the plurality of different services being respectively implemented by different autonomous individual systems, none of the plurality of different services being fixedly assigned to any of the different autonomous individual systems, but rather, the assignment of each of the different services to a particular one of the different autonomous individual systems changing dynamically during the provision of the respective service;

with a central program ~~means~~ stored in a data processing device, processing system-related data that are present in the

data processing device or are received by the data processing device via a communications network;

autonomously deriving operation-related decisions from the data;

based on the decisions, generating decision-specific control data for influencing the operation of one or more of the distributed hardware and/or software systems; and

transmitting the control data, via the communications network, to data processing devices assigned to the respective distributed hardware and/or software systems.

Claim 26 (currently amended): The method according to claim 25, wherein the central program ~~means~~ accesses at least one set of data stored in the data processing device and selected from the group consisting of rule data, performance data, grouping data, classification data, and availability data.

Claim 27 (previously presented): The method according to claim 26, wherein the rule data comprise rules regarding priorities and/or sequences and/or logical and/or temporal relationships, and the performance data relate to a current

operational load and/or a temporally restricted and/or dynamic and/or periodically needed capacity requirement.

Claim 28 (currently amended): The method according to claim 25, wherein the system-related data are selected from the group consisting of operating plans, information regarding operating states of individual systems, and ~~operator's wishes~~ ~~having been operator~~ input at a central and/or individual system level entered using an input device.

Claim 29 (currently amended): The method according to claim ~~25~~28, wherein the operating plans regulate run times and availability of individual hardware and/or software systems, and the information regarding the operating state of individual systems relate to a current and/or future and/or periodic workload.

Claim 30 (currently amended): The method according to claim 29, which comprises receiving, with the ~~central~~ data processing device, the information regarding the operating state of individual systems in an active and/or passive manner.

Claim 31 (currently amended): The method according to claim 29, wherein the information relates to at least one of:

hardware ~~selected from the group of~~ including at least
one of clients, servers, networks, and storage systems;
and

~~, and/or to software~~ including at least one of ~~selected~~
~~from the group of~~ applications, distributed applications
having services that are dependent on one another,
distributed application systems having virtualized
services that are dependent on one another and/or
independent of one another, and/or databases, and/or
front ends.

Claim 32 (currently amended): The method according to claim
25, wherein the control data are configured to control at
least one of: ~~operation selected from the group consisting of~~
starting a service, stopping a service, ~~and~~ adding services,
moving services, moving applications, and maintenance of a
distributed hardware and/or software system.

Claim 33 (previously presented): The method according to
claim 25, wherein the operation-related decisions include
determining administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks.

Claim 34 (currently amended): The method according to claim 33, which comprises, with the central program~~-means~~, autonomously separating administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks into subtasks taking into account logical and/or temporal relationships and/or dynamic influences and/or availability data and/or priorities and/or grouping data and/or classification data and/or application data that are present in the data processing device.

Claim 35 (currently amended): The method according to claim 33, which comprises, with the central program~~-means~~, autonomously separating administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks into subtasks for moving and/or replacing application entities.

Claim 36 (currently amended): The method according to claim 33, which comprises checking, with the central program~~-means~~, a temporal progression of the administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks that are transmitted to the individual hardware and/or software systems in the form of control data.

Claim 37 (currently amended): The method according to claim 36, which comprises configuring the central program ~~means~~ to check continuously and/or at particular intervals of time.

Claim 38 (currently amended): The method according to claim 25, which comprises assigning at least some of the distributed hardware and/or software systems their own autonomous program ~~means~~ that are stored in data processing devices in the form of autonomous agents that are subordinate to the central program ~~means~~.

Claim 39 (currently amended): The method according to claim 38, which comprises accessing, with the autonomous agent of an individual hardware and/or software system, rule data that are prescribed at ~~the~~ a system level in the data processing devices.

Claim 40 (currently amended): The method according to claim 39, wherein the rule data prescribed at the system level in the data processing devices comprise rules for the individual system and/or the interaction with the central autonomous program ~~means~~.

Claim 41 (currently amended): The method according to claim 39, which comprises interchanging control and/or rule data via the communications networks between the central program ~~means~~ and the autonomous agents of the individual hardware and/or software systems.

Claim 42 (currently amended): The method according to claim 39, which comprises, with the central program ~~means~~, selectively granting decision-making powers to the autonomous agents of the individual systems, and withdrawing the decision-making powers, using the communications networks.

Claim 43 (previously presented): The method according to claim 39, which comprises granting and withdrawing the decision-making powers permanently, temporally restricted, or dynamically.

Claim 44 (currently amended): The method according to claim 39, wherein the autonomous agents of the individual hardware and/or software systems respectively transmit general and/or system-specific control data to the data processing device of the central program ~~means~~ via a communications network and/or publish the data in generally accessible file systems and/or collaborate in a separation of administrative tasks and/or chains of tasks into subtasks.

Claim 45 (currently amended): The method according to claim 25, which comprises operating the central program ~~means~~ in different operating modes.

Claim 46 (currently amended): The method according to claim 45, which comprises operating the central program ~~means~~-in at least one operating mode selected from the group consisting of fully autonomous mode, partially autonomous mode, and with different reaction speeds.

Claim 47 (currently amended): The method according to claim 45, which comprises operating the central program ~~means~~-in partially autonomous mode and changing and/or interrupting the partially autonomous mode with a manual input on an input device by an authorized administrator.

Claim 48 (currently amended): The method according to claim 45, which comprises operating the central program ~~means~~-in partially autonomous mode and changing and/or interrupting the partially autonomous mode by the autonomous agents of the individual systems.

Claim 49 (currently amended): The method according to claim 25, wherein the central program ~~means~~-includes a notification component, and the notification component outputs information regarding substeps of the work of the central program ~~means~~ and/or the processing state thereof via an output device.

Claim 50 (previously presented): The method according to claim 25, wherein the distributed hardware and/or software systems comprise at least one application system.

Claim 51 (previously presented): The method according to claim 50, wherein the at least one application system comprises a plurality of entities each controlling at least one service.

Claim 52 (previously presented): The method according to claim 51, wherein the at least one service is selected from the group of interactive mode, batch mode, accounting services, printing services, messaging services, and network services.

Claim 53 (previously presented): The method according to claims 51, wherein a plurality of application systems cooperate in a system family.

Claim 54 (currently amended): The method according to claim 50, which comprises operating the at least one application system in a virtual environment ~~without fixed hardware assignment.~~

Claim 55 (previously presented): The method according to claim 25, wherein the distributed hardware and/or software systems comprise client/server systems and/or operating systems.

Claim 56 (currently amended): A system for managing and monitoring an operation of a plurality of distributed systems selected from the group consisting of hardware systems and software systems integrated into at least one communications network, the system comprising:

a data processing device, and at least one of a central autonomous program ~~means~~—stored in said data processing device and autonomous agents, stored in data processing devices, for individual hardware and/or software systems and/or input and/or output devices at a central system level and/or an individual system level, and configured to carry out the method according to claim 25.